

★ news release

It was in the early thirties that the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife of the Fish and Wildlife Service began a program of restoration of wetlands in order to restore and perpetuate the waterfowl resources of this nation. Seney was one of the first areas selected. Located as it was in a former waterfowl production area and practically worthless in its condition, it presented an ideal opportunity to demonstrate what could be done to restore values destroyed by avaricious man.

The results of our efforts can be seen as you look about you. The magnificent Canada goose nests here in abundance, and the refuge has become the spot from which these birds have spread out to repopulate the lakes and marshes of the Upper Peninsula. Ducks of many species also nest here and produce young in areas once dry and desolate. There are fish in the pools, and deer are abundant. Many of the smaller creatures dependent on wild wetland habitat have returned. It is not uncommon to see beaver and even otter in the pools. Bear, while somewhat uncommon, are seen from time to time, and several are known to live within the refuge. We point with pride to this refuge as an example of a restoration program to bring back those many values, some of which are intangible, to the American scene.

Briefly let me review the concept and purpose of the national wildlife refuge program. The most popularly accepted purpose of the refuges is for wildlife--to provide habitat in which waterfowl can safely nest and rear young, or other wildlife can find a safe haven from pursuit. As we study the matter further, we must broaden our viewpoint. The refuges are not just for wildlife--they are also for people. People are the reason for the refuge in the first place. People wanted the waterfowl resource restored. It is people who placed the value on the intangibles--on beauty, on the sight of wild geese in the sky, on broods of ducks in a pond or deer on isolated and open spaces. It is people who support the refuges through the purchase of duck stamps or the payment of taxes which are used to purchase and operate the refuges. We must then consider how best the refuges can serve the needs of the people.

It is people President Johnson has in mind when he says: "A growing population is swallowing up areas of natural beauty with its demands for living space, and is placing increased demand on our overburdened areas of recreation and pleasure."

Of course, it is obvious that the use of the refuges must be carefully regulated to provide for compatible types of use, and still maintain the purpose for which the refuges were established. The 87th Congress recognized this need and passed a law known as the Refuge Recreation Act, Public Law 87-714. That act authorizes the expenditure of funds for recreational purposes on refuges. The Congress also recognized the need for carefully regulating public use on refuges and stressed repeatedly in the act that recreational uses may not interfere with the primary purposes for which refuges are established. With this authorization and these guidelines, we are entering a program designed to provide more wildlife oriented public use of the national wildlife refuges.

Personnel of the Seney National Wildlife Refuge have pioneered in developing techniques to permit large numbers of people to enjoy

visiting a refuge within a framework of activities which would not interfere with, or in any way detract from the wildlife values of the refuge. A program for guided tours was established when Mr. C. J. Henry was refuge manager. At least twice a week visitors' cars were assembled at the headquarters, and under the leadership of one of the refuge staff proceeded over a selected route through the refuge. The nest of a bald eagle in a pine stub was pointed out to the visitors, as were goose nests and other species of wildlife. Deer were very often observed on these guided tours, and the refuge tour-leader explained the purpose and operation of the refuge.

These tours were tremendously popular, and after the first year it was necessary to expand our services to visitors. A self-guided nature trail was developed starting at the refuge office and proceeding around Pool F. Various plants were identified by means of markers. Resting points with benches were arranged where the visitor could watch waterfowl on the pool. This walk, too, proved immensely popular. These activities have all been carried on without affecting the wildlife using the refuge or the primary purpose for which the refuge was established.

Today we dedicate the new structure which we call our visitor center. This building was erected to provide a place where visitors may have an opportunity to examine what we call interpretive material so as to understand better what they will see when they go out on the refuge. In this center we will have exhibits, maps, and pictures showing visitors what they may expect to find on the refuge, and how refuge management is directed to the welfare of the various species of wildlife that are present. This building represents a new concept in recreation on national wildlife refuges, and we hope that with the facilities provided we will be able to offer our visitors a better understanding of, and a greater pleasure in visiting the refuge.

And now, if I may, a little commercial.....

This is a plug for the Conservation Fund Sticker, being sold by the Department of the Interior for an annual fee of \$7. This sticker is placed on a non-commercial vehicle, and entitles the operator and everyone with him to enter any Federal recreation area which would otherwise require a separate entrance fee. It's a real bargain, especially to anyone planning a trip that would take him to a number of Federal recreation areas. The funds raised from the sale of these stickers are earmarked for both State and Federal open space and outdoor recreation areas.

It's been a real pleasure to be here today, and I'll long remember my pleasant visit to the Seney Visitor Center. I hope I can return soon, and I hope you'll come often.

Thank you very much.

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